

REMARKS

The above amendments to the above-captioned application along with the following remarks are being submitted in response to the Office Action dated December 23, 2005. In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, the Examiner is respectfully requested to give due reconsideration to this application, to indicate the allowability of the claims, and to pass this case to issue.

Status of the Claims

Claims 2-3 and 7 are under consideration in this application. Claims 1 and 5-6 are being cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claim 2 is being amended, as set forth in the above marked-up presentation of the claim amendments, in order to more particularly define and distinctly claim applicants' invention.

The claims are being amended to correct formal errors and/or to better disclose or describe the features of the present invention as claimed. All the amendments to the claims are supported by the specification. Applicants hereby submit that no new matter is being introduced into the application through the submission of this response.

Formality Rejection

Claim 6 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. As claim 6 is being cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer, the rejection thus becomes moot.

Allowed Subject Matter

Claims 2, 3 and 7 would be allowed if rewritten into independent form to include the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. As claim 2 is being rewritten into independent form to include the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims, and claims 3 and 7 depend from claim 2, these claims are in condition for allowance.

Prior Art Rejection

Claim 1 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Takahashi et al. (Japanese Application No. 02-098197) and by Coglitore et al. (US Patent No. 6,496,366) respectively. Claim 5 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takahashi '197 or Coglitore '366 in view of Young et al. (US Patent No. 6,018,456).

As claims 1 and 5 are being cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer, the rejections thus become moot.

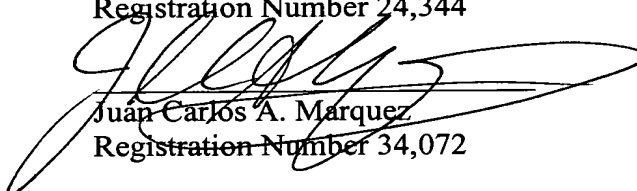
Conclusion

In view of all the above, clear and distinct differences as discussed exist between the present invention as now claimed and the prior art reference upon which the rejections in the Office Action rely, Applicants respectfully contend that the prior art references cannot anticipate the present invention or render the present invention obvious. Rather, the present invention as a whole is distinguishable, and thereby allowable over the prior art.

Favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully solicited. Should there be any outstanding issues requiring discussion that would further the prosecution and allowance of the above-captioned application, the Examiner is invited to contact the Applicants' undersigned representative at the address and phone number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

Stanley P. Fisher
Registration Number 24,344



Juan Carlos A. Marquez
Registration Number 34,072

REED SMITH LLP
3110 Fairview Park Drive, Suite 1400
Falls Church, Virginia 22042
(703) 641-4200

February 21, 2006

SPF/JCM/JT